

A serious error, similar to that which forms the subject of the following legend, is said to have occurred in the case of one, or rather two gentlemen named Curina, who dwelt near Hippo in the days of St. Augustine. The matter was set right, and a friendly hint at the same time conveyed to the ill-used individual, that it would be advisable for him to apply to the above-mentioned Father, and be baptized with as little delay as possible. The story is quoted in "The Doctor," together with another of the same kind, which is given on no less authority than that of Gregory the Great.

#### THE BROTHERS OF BIRCHINGTON: A LAY OF ST. THOMAS À BECKET

You are all aware that  
On our throne there once sat  
A very great King who'd an Angevin hat,  
With a great sprig of broom, which he wore as a badge in it,  
Named from this circumstance, Henry Plantagenet.

Pray don't suppose  
That I'm going to prose  
O'er Queen Eleanor's wrongs, or Miss Rosamond's woes,  
With the dagger and bowl, and all that sort of thing,  
Not much to the credit of Miss, Queen, or King.

The tale may be true,  
But between me and you,  
With the King's *escapade* I'll have nothing to do;  
But shall merely select, as a theme for my rhymes,  
A fact, which occur'd to some folks in his times.

If for health, or a "lark,"  
You should ever embark  
In that best of improvements on boats since the Ark,  
The steam-vessel call'd the "Red Rover," the barge  
Of an excellent officer, named Captain Large,

You may see, some half way  
'Twixt the pier at Herne Bay  
And Margate, the place where you're going to stay,  
A village called Birchington, fam'd for its "Rolls,"  
As the fishing-bank, just in its front, is for Soles.

Well, — there stood a fane  
In this Harry Broom's reign,  
On the edge of the cliff, overhanging the main,  
Renown'd for its sanctity all through the nation,  
And orthodox friars of the Austin persuasion.

The Ingoldsby Legends

Among them there was one,  
Whom if once I begun  
To describe as I ought I should never have done,  
Father Richard of Birchington, so was the Friar  
Yclept, whom the rest had elected their Prior.

He was tall and upright,  
About six feet in height,  
His complexion was what you'd denominate light,  
And the tonsure had left, 'mid his ringlets of brown,  
A little bald patch on the top of his crown.

His bright sparkling eye  
Was of hazel, and nigh  
Rose a finely arch'd eyebrow of similar dye,  
He'd a small, well-formed mouth with the *Cupidon* lip  
And an aquiline nose, somewhat red at the tip.

In doors and out  
He was very devout,  
With his *Aves* and *Paters* — and oh, such a knout!!  
For his self-flagellations! the Monks used to say  
He would wear out two penn'orth of whip-cord a day!

Then how his piety  
Shows in his diet, he  
Dines upon pulse, or, by way of variety,  
Sand-eels or dabs; or his appetite mocks  
With those small periwinkles that crawl on the rocks.

In brief, I don't stick  
To declare Father Dick—  
So they call'd him, "for short" — was a "Regular Brick,"  
A metaphor taken — I have not the page aright —  
Out of an ethical work by the Stagyrite.

Now Nature, 'tis said,  
Is a comical jade,  
And among the fantastical tricks she has play'd,  
Was the making our good Father Richard a Brother,  
As like him in form as one pea's like another;

He was tall and upright,  
About six feet in height,  
His complexion was what you'd denominate light,  
And, though he had not shorn his ringlets of brown,  
He'd a little bald patch on the top of his crown.

He'd a bright sparkling eye

Of the hazel, hard by  
Rose a finely-arch'd sourcil of similar dye;  
He'd a small, well-shaped mouth, with a *Cupidon* lip,  
And a good Roman nose, rather red at the tip.

But here, it's pretended,  
The parallel ended;  
In fact, there's no doubt his life might have been mended,  
And people who spoke of the Prior with delight,  
Shook their heads if you mention'd his brother, the Knight.

If you'd credit report,  
There was nothing but sport,  
And High Jinks going on night and day at "the Court,"  
Where Sir Robert, instead of devotion and charity,  
Spent all his time in unseemly hilarity.

He drinks and he eats  
Of choice liquors and meats,  
And he goes out on We'n'sdays and Fridays to treats,  
Gets tipsy whenever he dines or he sups,  
And is wont to come quarrelsome home in his cups.

No *Paters*, no *Aves*;  
An absolute slave he's  
To tarts, pickled salmon, and sauces, and gravies;  
While as to his beads — what a shame in a Knight! —  
He really don't know the wrong end from the right!

So, though 'twas own'd then  
By nine people in ten,  
That "Robert and Richard were two pretty men,"  
Yet there the praise ceased, or, at least the good Priest  
Was consider'd the "Beauty," Sir Robert the "Beast."

Indeed, I'm afraid  
More might have been laid  
To the charge of the Knight than was openly said,  
For then we'd no "Phiz's," no "H. B.'s," nor "Leeches,"  
To call Roberts "Bobs," and illustrate their speeches.

'Twas whisper'd he'd rob,  
Nay murder! a job  
Which would stamp him no "Brick," but a "Regular Snob,"  
(An obsolete term, which, at this time of day,  
We should probably render by *Mauvais Sujet*.)

Now if *here* such affairs  
Get wind unawares,

They are bruited about, doubtless, much more “down stairs,”  
Where Old Nick has a register-office, they say,  
With Commissioners quite of such matters *au fait*.

Of course, when he heard  
What his people averr'd  
Of Sir Robert's proceedings in deed and in word,  
He asked for the ledger, and hastened to look  
At the leaves on the Creditor side of this book.

'Twas with more than surprise  
That he now ran his eyes  
O'er the numberless items, oaths, curses, and lies,  
*Et cetera*, set down in Sir Robert's account,  
He was quite “flabbergasted” to see the amount.

“Dear me! this is wrong!  
It's a great deal too strong,  
I'd no notion this bill had been standing so long —  
Send Levybub here!” and he filled up a writ  
Of “*Ca sa*,” duly prefaced with “Limbo to wit.”

“Here Levybub, quick!”  
To his bailiff, said Nick,  
“I'm 'ryled,' and 'my dander's up,' 'Go a-head slick'  
Up to Kent — not Kentuck — and at once fetch away  
A snob there — I guess that's a *Mauvais Sujet*.”

“One De Birchington, knight —  
'Tis not clear quite  
What his t'other name is — they've not enter'd it right  
Ralph, Robert, or Richard? they've not gone so far,  
Our critturs have put it down merely as 'R.’

“But he's tall and upright,  
About six feet in height,  
His complexion, I reckon, you'd calculate light,  
And he's farther 'set down' having ringlets of brown,  
With a little bald patch oh the top of his crown.

“Then his eye and his lip,  
Hook-nose, red at tip  
Are marks your attention can't easily slip;  
Take Slomanoch with you, he's got a good knack  
Of soon grabbing his man, and be back in a crack!”

That same afternoon,  
Father Dick, who as soon  
Would “knock in” or “cut chapel” as jump o'er the moon,

Was missing at vespers — at compline — all night!  
And his monks were, of course, in a deuce of a fright.

Morning dawn'd — 'twas broad day,  
Still no Prior! the tray  
With his muffins and eggs went untasted away; —  
He came not to luncheon — all said, "it was rum of him!"  
— None could conceive what on earth had become of him.

They examined his cell,  
They peep'd down the well;  
They went up the tow'r, and looked into the bell,  
They dragg'd the great fish-pond, the little one tried,  
But found nothing at all, save some carp — which they fried.

"Dear me! Dear me!  
Why, where can he be?  
He's fall'n over the cliff? — tumbled into the sea?"  
"Stay — he talk'd," exclaimed one, "if I recollect right,  
Of making a call on his brother, the Knight!"

He turns as he speaks,  
The "Court Lodge," he seeks,  
Which was known then, as now, by the queer name of Quekes  
But scarce half a mile on his way had he sped,  
When he spied the good Prior in the paddock — stone dead!

Alas! 'twas too true!  
And I need not tell you  
In the convent his news made a pretty to do;  
Through all its wide precincts so roomy and spacious,  
Nothing was heard but "Bless *me!*" and "Good Gracious!!"

They sent for the May'r  
And the Doctor, a pair  
Of grave men, who began to discuss the affair,  
When in bounced the Coroner, foaming with fury,  
"Because," as he said, "'twas pooh! pooh! ing his jury."

Then commenced a dispute,  
And so hot they went to't,  
That things seem'd to threaten a serious *émeute*,  
When, just in the midst of the uproar and racket,  
Who should walk in but St. Thomas à Becket.

Quoth his saintship, "How now?  
Here's a fine coil, I trow!  
I should like to know, gentlemen, what's all this row?  
Mr. Wickliffe — or Wackliffe — whatever your name is—

And you, Mr. May'r, don't you know, Sirs, what shame is?

"Pray what's all this clatter  
About? — what's the matter?"  
Here a monk, whose teeth funk and concern made to chatter,  
Sobs out, as he points to the corpse on the floor,  
"Tis all dickey with poor Father Dick — he's no more!"

"How! — what?" says the saint,  
"Yes he is — no he ain't  
He can't be deceased — pooh! it's merely a faint,  
Or some foolish mistake which may serve for our laughter,  
'He *should* have died,' like the old Scotch Queen, 'hereafter.'

"His time is not out;  
Some blunder, no doubt,  
It shall go hard but what I'll know what it's about —  
I sha'n't be surprised if that scurvy Old Nick's  
Had a hand in't; it savours of one of his tricks."

When a crafty old hound  
Claps his nose to the ground,  
Then throws it up boldly, and bays out, "I've found!"  
And the Pack catch the note, I'd as soon think to check it,  
As dream of bamboozling St. Thomas à Becket.

Once on the scent,  
To business he went,  
"You Scoundrel, come here, Sir," ('twas Nick that he meant,)  
"Bring your books here this instant — bestir yourself — do,  
I've no time to waste on such fellows as you."

Every corner and nook  
In all Erebus shook,  
As he struck on the pavement his pastoral crook,  
All its tenements trembled from basement to roofs,  
And their *nigger* inhabitants shook in their hoofs.

Hanging his ears,  
Yet dissembling his fears,  
Ledger in hand, straight "Auld Hornie" appears,  
With that sort of half-sneaking, half-impudent look,  
Bankrupts sport when cross-question'd by Cresswell or Cooke.

"So Sir-r-r! you are here,"  
Said the Saint with a sneer,  
"My summons, I trust, did not much interfere  
With your morning engagements — I merely desire,  
At your leisure, to know what you've done with my Prior?"

“Now, none of your lies,  
Mr. Nick! I’d advise  
You to tell me the truth without any disguise,  
Or-r-r!” The Saint, while his rosy gills seem’d to grow rosier,  
Here gave another great thump with his Crosier.

Like a small boy at Eton,  
Who’s not quite a Crichton,  
And don’t know his task but expects to be beaten,  
Nick stammer’d, scarce knowing what answer to make,  
“Sir, I’m sadly afraid here has been a mistake.

“These things will occur,  
We are all apt to err,  
The most cautious sometimes as you know, holy Sir;  
For my own part — I’m sure I do all that I can —  
But — the fact is — I fear — we have got the wrong man.”

“Wrong man!” roar’d the Saint —  
But the scene I can’t paint,  
The best colours I have are a vast deal too faint —  
Nick afterwards own’d that he ne’er knew what fright meant,  
Before he saw Saint under so much excitement.

“Wrong man! don’t tell me —  
Pooh!—fiddle-de-dee!  
What’s your right, Scamp, to *any* man! — come, let me see;  
I’ll teach you, you thorough-paced rascal, to meddle  
With church matters, come, Sirrah, out with your schedule!”

In support of his claim  
The Fiend turns to the name  
Of “De Birchington” written in letters of flame,  
Below which long items stand, column on column,  
Enough to have eked out a decent-sized volume!

Sins of all sorts and shapes,  
From small practical japes,  
Up to dicings, and drinkings, and murders, and rapes,  
And then of such standing! — a merciless tick,  
From an Oxford tobacconist, — let alone Nick.

The Saint in surprise  
Scarce believed his own eyes,  
Still he knew he’d to deal with the father of lies,  
And “So *this!* — you call *this!*” he exclaimed in a searching tone,  
“This!!! the account of my friend Dick de Birchington!”

“Why,” said Nick, with an air  
Of great candour, “it’s there  
Lies the awkwardest part of this awkward affair —  
I thought all was right — see the height tallies quite,  
The complexion’s what all must consider as light;  
There’s the nose, and the lip, and the ringlets of brown,  
And the little bald patch on the top of the crown.

“And then the surname,  
So exactly the same—  
I don’t know — I can’t tell how the accident came,  
But *some* how — I own it’s a very sad job,  
But — my bailiff grabb’d Dick when he *should* have nabb’d Bob.

“I am vex’d beyond bounds  
You should have such good grounds  
For complaint; I would rather have given five pounds,  
And any apology, Sir, you may choose,  
I’ll make with much pleasure, and put in the news.”

“An apology! — pooh!  
Much good that will do!  
An ‘*apology*’ quoth a! — and that too from you! —  
Before any proposal is made of the sort,  
Bring back your stol’n goods, thief! — produce them in Court!”

In a moment, so small  
It seem’d no time at all,  
Father Richard sat up on his what-do-ye-call —  
*Sur son séant* — and, what was as wondrous as pleasing,  
At once began coughing, and sniffling, and sneezing.

While, strange to relate,  
The Knight, whom the fate  
Of his brother had reach’d, and who’d knocked at the gate,  
To make farther enquiries, had scarce made his bow  
To the Saint, ere he vanish’d and no one knew how!

*Erupit — evasit,*  
As Tully would phrase it,  
And none could have known where to find his *Hic jacet* —  
That sentence which man his mortality teaches —  
Sir Robert had disappeared, body and breeches!

“Heyday! Sir, heyday!  
What’s the matter now — eh?”  
Quoth A’Becket, observing the gen’ral dismay,  
“How, again! — ’pon my word this is really too bad!  
It would drive *any* Saint in the calendar mad.

“What, still at your tricking?  
You *will* have a kicking?  
I see you won’t rest till you’ve got a good licking —  
Your claim, friend? — what claim? — why you show’d me before  
That your *old* claim was cancell’d — you’ve crossed out the score!

“Is it that way you’d Jew one?  
You’ve settled the true one?  
Do you mean to tell me he has run up a new one?  
Of the thousands you’ve cheated  
And scurvily treated,  
Name one you’ve dared charge with a bill once receipted!  
In the Bankruptcy Court should you dare to presume  
To attempt it, they’d soon kick you out of the room,  
— Ask Commissioner Fonblanque, or ask my Lord Brougham.

“And then to make under  
So barefaced a blunder,  
Your caption! — why, what’s the world come to, I wonder?  
My patience! it’s just like his impudence, drat him!  
— Stand out of the way there, and let me get at him!”

The Saint raised his arm,  
But Old Nick, in alarm,  
Dash’d up through the skylight, not doing much harm,  
While, *quitte pour la peur*, the Knight, sound on the whole,  
Down the chimney came tumbling as black as a coal!

Spare we to tell  
Of what after befell!  
How the Saint lectured Robert de Birchington well,  
Bade him alter his life, and held out as a warning  
The narrow escape he’d made on’t that morning.

Nor need we declare  
How, then and there,  
The Jury and Coroner blew up the May’r  
For his breach of decorum as one of the *Quorum*,  
In not having Levybub brought up before ‘em.

Nor will you require  
Me to state how the Prior  
Could never thenceforth bear the sight of a fire,  
Nor ever was heard to express a desire  
In cold weather to see the thermometer higher.

Nor shall I relate  
The subsequent fate

The Ingoldsby Legends

Of St. Thomas à Becket, whose reverend pate  
Fitzurse and De Morville, and Brito and Tracy  
Shaved off, as his crown had been merely a jasey.

Suffice it to say,  
From that notable day  
The “Twin Birchington Brothers” together grew gray:  
In the same holy convent continued to dwell,  
Same food and same fastings, same habit, same cell.

No more the Knight rattles  
In broils and in battles,  
But sells, by De Robins, his goods and his chattels,  
And counting all wealth a mere Will-o’-the-wisp,  
Disposes of Quekes to Sir Nicholas Crispe.

One spot alone  
Of all he had known  
Of his spacious domain he retain’d as his own,  
In a neighbouring parish, whose name, I may say,  
Scarce any two people pronounce the same way.

Re-*cul*-ver some style it,  
While others revile it  
As bad, and say *Re-culver* — ’t isn’t worth while, it  
Would seem, to dispute, when we know the result immat-  
-erial — I accent, myself, the penultimate.

Sages, with brains  
Full of “Saxon remains,”  
May call me a booby, perhaps, for my pains,  
Still I hold, at the hazard of being thought dull by ‘em,  
Fast by the quantity mark’d for *Regulbium*.

Call’t as you will,  
The Traveller still,  
In the voyage that we talk’d about, marks on the hill  
Overhanging the sea, the “twin towers” raised then  
By “Robert and Richard, those two pretty men.”

Both tall and upright,  
And just equal in height;  
The Trinity House talked of painting them white,  
And the thing was much spoken of some time ago,  
When the Duke, I believe — but I really don’t know.

Well — there the “Twins” stand  
On the verge of the land,  
To warn mariners off from the Columbine sand,

And many a poor man have Robert and Dick  
By their vow caused to 'scape, like themselves, from Old Nick.

So, whether you're sailors  
Or Tooley-street Tailors,  
Broke loose from your masters, those sternest of jailers,  
And, bent upon pleasure, are taking your trip  
In a craft which you fondly conceive is a ship,

When you've passed by the Nore,  
And you hear the winds roar  
In a manner you scarce could have fancied before,  
When the cordage and tackling  
Are flapping and crackling,  
And the boy with the bell  
Thinks it useless to tell  
You that "dinner's on table," because you're unwell;

When above you all's "scud,"  
And below you the flood  
Looks a horrible mixture of soap-suds and mud,  
When the timbers are straining,  
And folks are complaining,  
The dead-lights are letting the spray and the rain in,  
When the helm's-man looks blue,  
And Captain Large too,  
And you really don't know what on earth you shall do.

In this hubbub and row,  
Think where you'd be now  
Except for the Birchington boys and their vow!  
And while o'er the wide wave you feel the craft pitch hard,  
PRAIE FOR YE SOWLES OF ROBERTTE AND RYCHARD.

#### MORAL

It's a subject of serious complaint in some houses,  
With young married men who have elderly spouses,  
That persons are seen in their figures and faces,  
With very queer people in very queer places,  
So like them that one for the other's oft taken,  
And conjugal confidence thereby much shaken:  
Explanations too often are thought mere pretences,  
And Richard gets scolded for Robert's offences.

In a matter so nice,  
If I'm ask'd my advice,  
I say copy King Henry to obviate that,

And stick something remarkable up in your hat!

Next, observe, in this world where we've so many cheats,  
How useful it is to preserve your receipts!  
If you deal with a person whose truth you don't doubt,  
Be particular, still, that your bill is cross'd out;  
But, with any inducement to think him a scamp,  
Have a formal receipt on a regular stamp!

Let every gay gallant my story who notes,  
Take warning, and not go on "sowing wild oats!"  
Nor depend that some friend  
Will always attend,  
And by "making all right" bring him off in the end;  
He may be mistaken, so let him beware,  
St. Thomas à Becket's are now rather rare.

Last of all, may'rs and magistrates, never be rude  
To juries! they are people who *won't* be pooh-pooh'd!  
Especially Sandwich ones — no one can say  
But himself may come under their clutches one day;  
They then may pay off  
In kind any scoff,  
And, turning their late verdict quite "*wisey wersey*"  
"*Acquit* you," and *not* "recommend you to mercy."†

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† At a Quarter Sessions held at Sandwich, (some six miles from Birchington,) on Tuesday the 8th of April last, before W. F. Boteler, Esq., the recorder, Thomas Jones, mariner, aged 17, was tried for stealing a jacket, value ten shillings. The jury, after a patient hearing, found him "not guilty," and "recommended him to mercy." — See the whole case reported in the "Kentish Observer," April 10, 1845.

THE KNIGHT AND THE LADY: A DOMESTIC LEGEND OF THE REIGN OF  
QUEEN ANNE

“Hail, wedded love! mysterious tie!”

*Thomson—or Somebody.*

The Lady Jane was tall and slim,  
The Lady Jane was fair,  
And Sir Thomas, her Lord, was stout of limb,  
But his cough was short, and his eyes were dim,  
And he wore green “specs,” with a tortoiseshell rim,  
And his hat was remarkably broad in the brim,  
And she was uncommonly fond of him, —  
And they were a loving pair! —  
And the name and the fame  
Of the Knight and his Dame  
Were ev’rywhere hail’d with the loudest acclaim;  
And wherever they went, or wherever they came,  
Far and wide,  
The people cried,  
Huzza! for the Lord of this noble domain, —  
Huzza! Huzza! Huzza! — once again! —  
Encore! —  
Encore! —  
One cheer more!—  
— All sorts of pleasure, and no sort of pain  
To Sir Thomas the Good, and the Fair Lady Jane!!

Now Sir Thomas the Good,  
Be it well understood,  
Was a man of a very contemplative mood, —  
He would pore by the hour,  
O’er a weed, or a flower,  
Or the slugs that come crawling out after a shower;  
Black-beetles, and Bumble-bees, — Blue-bottle flies,  
And Moths were of no small account in his eyes;  
An “Industrious Flea” he’d by no means despise,  
While an “Old Daddy-long-legs,” whose “long legs” and thighs  
Pass’d the common in shape, or in colour, or size,  
He was wont to consider an absolute prize.  
Nay, a hornet or wasp he could scarce “keep his paws off” — he  
Gave up, in short,  
Both business and sport,  
And abandon’d himself, *tout entier*, to Philosophy.

Now, as Lady Jane was tall and slim,  
And Lady Jane was fair,  
And a good many years the junior of him, —  
And as he,  
All agree,  
Look'd less like her *Mari*,  
As he walk'd by her side, than her *Père*†,  
There are some might be found entertaining a notion  
That such an entire and exclusive devotion  
To that part of science, folks style Entomology,  
Was a positive shame,  
And, to such a fair Dame,  
Really demanded some sort of apology;  
— No doubt, it *would* vex  
One half of the sex  
To see their own husband, in horrid green “specs,”  
Instead of enjoying a sociable chat,  
Still poking his nose into this and to that,  
At a gnat, or a bat, or a cat, or a rat,  
Or great ugly things,  
All legs and wings,  
With nasty long tails arm'd with nasty long stings;  
And they'd join such a log of a spouse to condemn,  
— One eternally thinking,  
And blinking, and winking  
At grubs, — when he ought to be winking at them. —  
But no! — oh no!  
’Twas by no means so  
With the Lady Jane Ingoldsby — she, far discreeter,  
And, having a temper more even and sweeter,  
Would never object to *Her* spouse, in respect to  
His poking and peeping  
After “things creeping;”  
Much less be still keeping lamenting, and weeping,  
Or scolding at what she perceived him so deep in.

*Tout au contraire*,  
No lady so fair  
Was e'er known to wear more contented an air;  
And, — let who would call, — every day she was there,  
Propounding receipts for some delicate fare,  
Some toothsome conserve, of quince, apple, or pear,  
Or distilling strong waters, — or potting a hare, —  
Or counting her spoons and her crockery-ware; —  
Or else, her tambour-frame before her, with care

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† My friend, Mr. Hood,  
In his comical mood,  
Would have probably styled the good Knight and his Lady —  
Him—“Stern-old and Hopkins,” and her “Tête and Braidy.”

Embroidering a stool or a back for a chair,  
 With needle-work roses, most cunning and rare,  
 Enough to make less-gifted visitors stare,  
 And declare, where'er  
 They had been, that, "they ne'er  
 In their lives had seen aught that at all could compare  
 With dear Lady Jane's housewifery — that they would swear."

Nay more; don't suppose  
 With such doings as those  
 This account of her merits must come to a close;  
 No; — examine her conduct more closely, you'll find  
 She by no means neglected improving her mind;  
 For there, all the while, with air quite bewitching,  
 She sat herring-boning, tambouring, or stitching,  
 Or having an eye to affairs of the kitchen,  
 Close by her side,  
 Sat her kinsman, MacBride,  
 Her cousin, fourteen-times removed, — as you'll see  
 If you look at the Ingoldsby family tree,  
 In "Burke's Commoners," vol. xx. page 53.  
 All the papers I've read agree,  
 Too, with the pedigree,  
 Where, among the collateral branches, appears  
 "Captain Dugald MacBride, Royal Scots Fusileers;"  
 And I doubt if you'd find in the whole of his clan  
 A more highly-intelligent, worthy young man; —  
 And there he'd be sitting,  
 While she was a-knitting,  
 Or hemming, or stitching, or darning and fitting,  
 Or putting "a gore," or a "gusset," or "bit" in,  
 Reading aloud, with a very grave look,  
 Some very "wise saw" from some very good book, —  
 Some such pious divine as St. Thomas Aquinas:  
 Or, equally charming,  
 The works of Bellarmine;  
 Or else he unravels  
 The "voyages and travels"  
 Of Hackluytz — (how sadly these Dutch names *do* sully verse!) —  
 Purchas's, Hawksworth's, or Lemuel Gulliver's, —  
 Not to name others, 'mongst whom there are few so  
 Admired as John Bunyan, and Robinson Crusoe. —  
 No matter who came,  
 It was always the same,  
 The Captain was reading aloud to the Dame,  
 Till, from having gone through half the books on the shelf,  
 They were almost as wise as Sir Thomas himself.

Well, — it happened one day,  
— I really can't say  
The particular month; — but I *think* 'twas in May, —  
'Twas, I *know*, in the Spring-time, — when "Nature looks gay,"  
As the Poet observes, — and on tree-top and spray  
The dear little dickey-birds carol away;  
When the grass is so green, and the sun is so bright,  
And all things are teeming with life and with light, —  
That the whole of the house was thrown into affright,  
For no soul could conceive what was gone with the Knight!

It seems he had taken  
A light breakfast — bacon,  
An egg — with a little broiled haddock — at most  
A round and a half of some hot butter'd toast,  
With a slice of cold sirloin from yesterday's roast.  
And then — let me see! —  
He had two — perhaps three  
Cups (with sugar and cream) of strong Gunpowder tea,  
With a spoonful in each of some choice *eau de vie*,  
— Which with nine out of ten would perhaps disagree. —  
— In fact, I and my son  
Mix "black" with our "Hyson,"  
Neither having the nerves of a bull, or a bison,  
And both hating brandy like what some call "pison,"  
No matter for that —  
He had call'd for his hat,  
With the brim that I've said was so broad and so flat,  
And his "specs" with the tortoiseshell rim, and his cane  
With the crutch-handled top, which he used to sustain  
His steps in his walks, and to poke in the shrubs  
And the grass, when unearthing his worms and his grubs —  
Thus arm'd, he set out on a ramble — alack!  
He *set out*, poor dear Soul! — but he never came back!

"First dinner-bell" rang  
Out its euphonous clang  
At five — folks kept early hours then — and the "Last"  
Ding-dong'd, as it ever was wont, at half-past,  
While Betsey, and Sally,  
And Thompson, the *Valet*,  
And every one else was beginning to bless himself,  
Wondering the Knight had not come in to dress himself. —  
— Quoth Betsey, "Dear me! why, the fish will be cold!" —  
Quoth Sally, "Good gracious! how 'Missis' *will* scold!" —  
Thompson, the *Valet*,  
Look'd gravely at Sally,  
As who should say "Truth must not always be told!"  
Then, expressing a fear lest the Knight might take cold,

Thus exposed to the dews,  
Lambs'-wool stockings, and shoes,  
Of each a fresh pair,  
He put down to air,  
And hung a clean shirt to the fire on a chair. —

Still the Master was absent — the Cook came and said, “he  
Much fear'd, as the dinner had been so long ready,  
The roast and the boil'd  
Would be all of it spoil'd,  
And the puddings, her Ladyship thought such a treat,  
He was morally sure, would be scarce fit to eat!”  
This closed the debate —  
“’Twould be folly to wait,”  
Said the Lady. “Dish up! — Let the meal be served straight;  
And let two or three slices be put on a plate,  
And keep hot for Sir Thomas. — He’s lost, sure as fate!  
And, a hundred to one, won’t be home till it’s late!”  
— Captain Dugald MacBride then proceeded to face  
The Lady at table, — stood up, and said grace, —  
Then set himself down in Sir Thomas’s place.

Wearily, wearily, all that night,  
That live-long night, did the hours go by;  
And the Lady Jane,  
In grief and in pain,  
She sat herself down to cry! —  
And Captain MacBride,  
Who sat by her side,  
Though I really can’t say that he actually cried,  
At least had a tear in his eye! —  
As much as can well be expected, perhaps,  
From very “young fellows,” for very “old chaps;”  
And if he had said  
What he’d got in his head,  
’Twould have been, “Poor old Buffer! he’s certainly dead!”

The morning dawn’d, — and the next, — and the next  
And all in the mansion were still perplex’d;  
No watch-dog “bay’d a welcome home,” as  
A watch-dog should, to the “Good Sir Thomas;”  
No knocker fell  
His approach to tell,  
Not so much as a runaway ring at the bell —  
The Hall was silent as Hermit’s cell.

Yet the sun shone bright upon tower and tree,  
And the meads smiled green as green may be,  
And the dear little dickey-birds caroll’d with glee,

And the lambs in the park skipp'd merry and free —  
— Without, all was joy and harmony!  
“And thus 'twill be, — nor long the day, —  
Ere we, like him, shall pass away!  
Yon Sun, that now *our* bosoms warms,  
Shall shine, — but shine on other forms; —  
Yon Grove, whose choir so sweetly cheers  
Us now, shall sound on other ears,—  
The joyous Lamb, as now, shall play,  
But other eyes its sports survey, —  
The Stream we loved shall roll as fair,  
The flowery sweets, the trim Parterre  
Shall scent, as now, the ambient air,—  
The Tree, whose bending branches bear  
The One loved name — shall yet be there; —  
But where the hand that carved it? — Where?” —

These were hinted to me as  
The very ideas  
Which passed through the mind of the fair Lady Jane,  
Her thoughts having taken a sombre-ish train,  
As she walk'd on the esplanade, to and again,  
With Captain MacBride  
Of course, at her side,  
Who could not look quite so forlorn, — though he tried,  
— An “idea,” in fact, had got into *his* head,  
That if “poor dear Sir Thomas” should really be dead,  
It might be no bad “spec.” to be there in his stead,  
And, by simply contriving, in due time, to wed  
A Lady who was young and fair,  
A Lady slim and tall,  
To set himself down in comfort there  
The Lord of Tapton Hall. —

Thinks he, “We have sent Half over Kent,  
And nobody knows how much money's been spent,  
Yet no one's been found to say which way he went! —

The groom, who's been over  
To Folkestone and Dover,  
Can't get any tidings at all of the rover!  
— Here's a fortnight and more has gone by, and we've tried  
Every plan we could hit on — the whole country-side,  
Upon all its dead walls, with placards we've supplied,—  
And we've sent out the Crier, and had him well cried —  
'MISSING!! Stolen, or stray'd,  
Lost, or mislaid,  
A GENTLEMAN; — middle-aged, sober, and staid; —  
Stoops slightly; — and when he left home was array'd

In a sad-coloured suit, somewhat dingy and fray'd; —  
 Had spectacles on with a tortoiseshell rim,  
 And a hat rather low-crowned, and broad in the brim. —  
 Whoe'er  
 Shall bear,  
 Or shall send him with care,  
 (Right side uppermost) home; — or shall give notice where  
 The said middle-aged GENTLEMAN is; or shall state  
 Any fact, that may tend to throw light on his fate,  
 To the man at the turnpike, called TAPPINGTON GATE,  
 Shall receive a REWARD of FIVE POUNDS for his trouble, —  
 (👉 N.B. — If defunct the REWARD will be double!! 👈)'

“Had he been above ground  
 He *must* have been found.  
 No; doubtless he's shot, — or he's hang'd, — or he's drown'd! —  
 Then his Widow — ay! ay! —  
 But, what will folk say! —  
 To address her at once — at so early a day!  
 Well — what then? — who cares? — let 'em say what they may —  
 A fig for their nonsense and chatter! — suffice it, her  
 Charms will excuse one for casting sheep's eyes at her!”

When a man has decided  
 As Captain MacBride did,  
 And once fully made up his mind on the matter, he  
 Can't be too prompt in unmasking his battery.  
 He began on the instant, and vow'd that “her eyes  
 Far exceeded in brilliance the stars in the skies, —  
 That her lips were like roses — her cheeks were like lilies —  
 Her breath had the odour of daffy-down-dillies!” —  
 With a thousand more compliments equally true,  
 And expressed in similitudes equally new!  
 — Then his left arm he placed  
 Round her jimp, taper waist —  
 — Ere she'd fix'd to repulse, or return, his embrace,  
 Up came running a man, at a deuce of a pace,  
 With that very peculiar expression of face  
 Which always betokens dismay or disaster,  
 Crying out, — 'twas the Gardener, — “Oh, Ma'am! we've found Master!” —  
 — “Where? where?” scream'd the lady; and  
 Echo scream'd — “Where?” —  
 — The man couldn't say “There!”  
 He had no breath to spare,  
 But, gasping for air, he could only respond,  
 By pointing — he pointed, alas! — TO THE POND!!

— 'Twas e'en so — poor dear Knight! — with his "specs" and his hat  
He'd gone poking his nose into this and to that;  
When, close to the side  
Of the bank, he espied  
An "uncommon fine" Tadpole, remarkably fat!  
He stooped; — and he thought her  
His own;—he had caught her!  
Got hold of her tail, — and to land almost brought her,  
When — he plump'd head and heels into fifteen feet water!

The Lady Jane was tall and slim,  
The Lady Jane was fair,  
Alas, for Sir Thomas! — she grieved for him,  
As she saw two serving-men, sturdy of limb,  
His body between them bear.  
She sobb'd, and she sigh'd; she lamented, and cried,  
For of sorrow brimful was her cup;  
She swoon'd, and I think she'd have fall'n down and died,  
If Captain MacBride  
Had not been by her side,  
With the Gardener; they both their assistance supplied,  
And managed to hold her up. —  
But, when she "comes to,"  
Oh! 'tis shocking to view  
The sight which the corpse reveals!  
Sir Thomas's body,  
It look'd so odd—he  
Was half eaten up by the eels!  
His waistcoat and hose, and the rest of his clothes  
Were all gnawed through and through;  
And out of each shoe  
An eel they drew;  
And from each of his pockets they pull'd out two!  
And the Gardener himself had secreted a few,  
As well we may suppose;  
For, when he came running to give the alarm,  
He had six in the basket that hung on his arm.

Good Father John  
Was summon'd anon;  
Holy water was sprinkled,  
And little bells tinkled,  
And tapers were lighted,  
And incense ignited,  
And masses were sung, and masses were said,  
All day, for the quiet repose of the dead,  
And all night no one thought about going to bed.

But Lady Jane was tall and slim,  
And Lady Jane was fair, —  
And, ere morning came, that winsome dame  
Had made up her mind — or, what's much the same,  
Had *thought about* — once more “changing her name,”  
And she said, with a pensive air,  
To Thompson, the valet, while taking away,  
When supper was over, the cloth and the tray, —  
“Eels a many I've ate; but any  
So good ne'er tasted before! —  
They're a fish, too, of which I'm remarkably fond. —  
Go — pop Sir Thomas again in the Pond —  
Poor dear! — HE'LL CATCH US SOME MORE!!”



MORAL

All middle-aged Gentlemen let me advise,  
If you're married, and have not got very good eyes,  
Don't go poking about after blue-bottle flies! —  
If you've spectacles, don't have a tortoiseshell rim,  
And don't go near the water, — unless you can swim!

Married Ladies, especially such as are fair,  
Tall, and slim, I would next recommend to beware

The Ingoldsby Legends

How, on losing *one* spouse, they give way to despair;  
But let them reflect, "There are fish, and no doubt on't —  
As good *in* the river as ever came *out* on't!"

Should they light on a spouse who is given to roaming  
In solitude — *raison de plus*, in the "gloaming," —  
Let them have a fix'd time for said spouse to come home in!  
And if, when "last dinner-bell"'s rung, he is late,  
To insure better manners in future — Don't wait! —

If of husband or children they chance to be fond,  
Have a stout iron-wire fence put all round the pond!

One more piece of advice, and I close my appeals —  
That is — if you chance to be partial to eels,  
Then — *Crede expert* — trust one who has tried —  
Have them spitch-cock'd, — or stew'd — they're too oily when fried!

\* \* \* \* \*